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Straight Talk Just for Guys

Let's face it. Everyone wants to be a winner. And what guy wouldn't want to look "ripped" or have a body that girls admire? But if you're not careful, you could sacrifice your good health for temporary glory.

Consider this. You probably think that sports supplements are safe to use and good for you because they're sold at gyms and health food stores. You might be right. But you might be wrong.

The dangers of sports supplements stem from the fact that little is known about them and their side effects on the body. Because the sports supplement industry is largely unregulated, there's no way to know what or how pure the ingredients are.

Side effects of sports supplements include:

- ◆ Allergic reactions
- ◆ Stomach cramps
- ◆ Muscle cramps
- ◆ Nausea and vomiting
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Weight gain
- ◆ Water retention

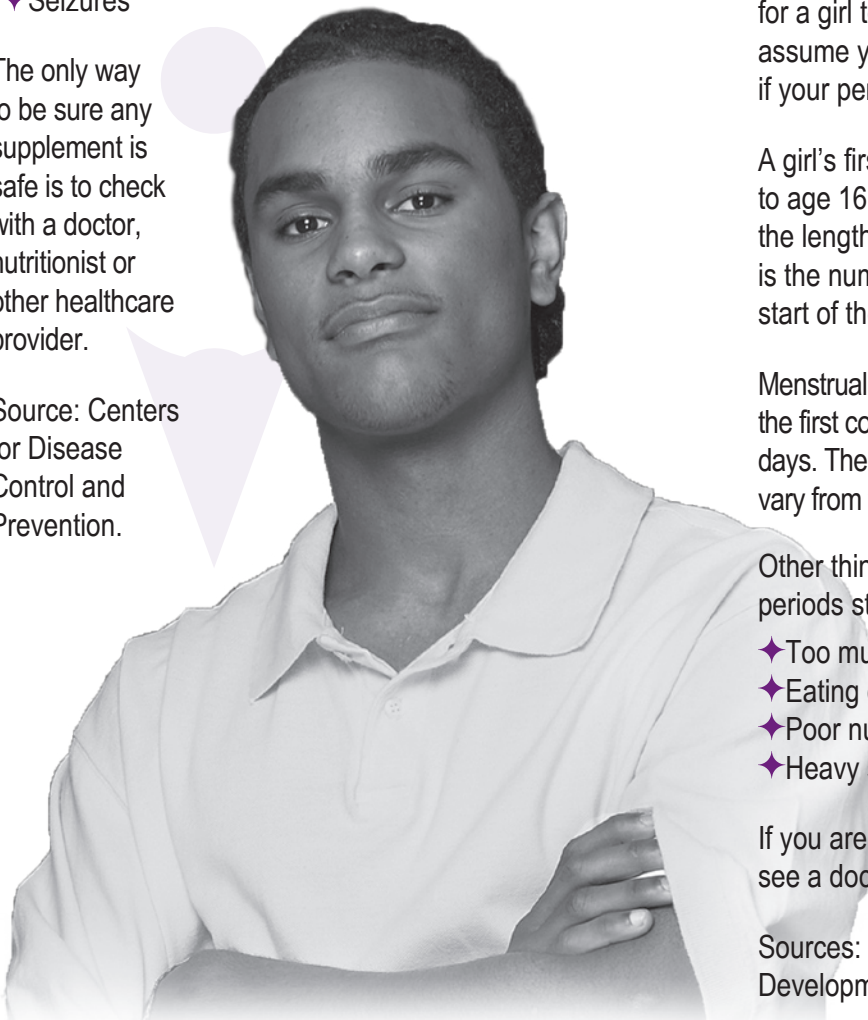
What about performance-enhancing drugs or PEDs? Some of the most common PEDs are steroids and growth hormones. If you use PEDs to get an edge, you're not only cheating, you're playing a losing game.

In addition to severe acne, PEDs can cause serious health problems – even death. You won't care how fast or strong you are if you have to deal with some of these problems:

- ◆ Baldness
- ◆ Muscle cramps & strain
- ◆ Sleep problems
- ◆ Heat stroke
- ◆ Severe mood swings
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Seizures
- ◆ Irregular heart beat
- ◆ Heart attack
- ◆ Stroke and blood clots
- ◆ Abnormal kidney function
- ◆ Liver damage
- ◆ Cancers

The only way to be sure any supplement is safe is to check with a doctor, nutritionist or other healthcare provider.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Straight Talk Just for Girls

"My menstrual periods are not regular. What's wrong with me?" If this is your situation, there are some things you need to know.

Many girls have very irregular periods during the first couple years of menstruating. In fact, being irregular is regular for many girls. Menstruating happens when all parts of a girl's reproductive system have matured and are working together.

The levels of your hormones determine the amount of blood and how long your period lasts. Since you are still growing in your teen years, your hormone levels are constantly changing. This can account for your period being different from one to the next.

In addition, young women don't always ovulate every month when they first get their periods. And there's no sure way for a girl to know which months she is ovulating. You should assume you can get pregnant each and every month, even if your periods are irregular.

A girl's first period can happen anytime from about age 10 to age 16. Just as the onset of your period can vary, so can the length and the number of days between cycles. A cycle is the number of days from the start of one period to the start of the next.

Menstrual cycles can be anywhere between 21 and 45 days for the first couple of years. The cycle usually shortens to 21 to 34 days. The amount of time that you may have your period can vary from two or three days to seven days or longer.

Other things can also cause irregular periods or make your periods stop. They include:

- ◆ Too much exercise
- ◆ Eating disorders
- ◆ Poor nutrition
- ◆ Heavy stress

If you are sexually active and skip a period, you should still see a doctor to see if you are pregnant.

Sources: National Institute of Child Health & Human Development and the Food and Drug Administration

Beware of Staph Infections

As a teen, you know that pimples and zits can be common. But beware of skin infections that may appear as pustules or boils. They are often red, swollen and painful, or they may have pus and other drainage. They may be caused by a type of bacteria called staphylococcus (staf-uh-low-kah-kus), or “staph.”

Several types of staph bacteria exist. Staph bacteria live in the nose and on skin surfaces of healthy people. But when the skin is broken, staph bacteria can enter the wound and cause an infection. Most of these skin infections are minor and can be treated without antibiotics.

However, a staph infection that is showing up in schools can become serious because it is resistant to many antibiotics. If the infection enters the blood stream, it can cause serious health problems, even death in some cases.

Schools have many elements that make spreading of the infection possible. In some cases, schools have been closed to be cleaned and disinfected because of the widespread infection.

Factors of spreading include:

- ◆ Crowding – skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a staph infection
- ◆ Frequent contact, such as in sports
- ◆ Open wounds
- ◆ Sharing of infected items

Protect Yourself

- ◆ Keep clean. Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Shower or bathe daily.
- ◆ Cover cuts and scrapes with a clean dry bandage until healed.
- ◆ Do not share personal items. Avoid sharing towels, razors or clothing that has come into contact with your bare skin. Use clothing or a towel between your skin and shared equipment such as weight-training benches. Disinfect sports equipment after each use.
- ◆ Keep surfaces clean that often come in contact with your skin.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Sweets Are No Treat for Teeth

Do sweet treats affect your teeth? Yes! Food or drinks with a lot of sugar can cause cavities. The bacteria (germs) in your mouth love sugars found in many foods and drinks.

Bacteria feed on the sugars producing acids that hurt the enamel or hard surface of your teeth. If you eat or drink a lot of sugar, and don't brush your teeth afterwards, more damage and cavities can occur.

It's important to choose food and drinks wisely, and think before you eat. Here are some tips that will help:

- ◆ Eat a healthy diet of fruit, vegetables, meat, bread and milk.
- ◆ Choose healthy snacks that are low in sugar such as apples, carrot sticks, yogurt or low fat cheese.
- ◆ Drink lots of water.
- ◆ Don't drink soft drinks. They contain a lot of sugar. A can of regular soda has 10 teaspoons of sugar.
- ◆ Brush your teeth thoroughly after food or drink that contains sugar. Remember the longer the sugar sits on your teeth, the more damage it can cause.
- ◆ Brush thoroughly two times each day with fluoride toothpaste and floss once a day.
- ◆ Visit your dentist regularly for checkups and cleanings.

Dentists have known for a long time that having a healthy mouth helps you have a healthy body. To stay healthy, see your dentist every six months, and brush and floss your teeth daily.

As a PHP TennCare member you have TENNderCARE dental services until you become 21 years old. These services include free six-month checkups, fluoride treatments and sealants. Call Doral Customer Service toll free at 888-233-5935 or visit www.doralusa.com:

- ◆ For help finding a dentist
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Energy Drinks : Good or BAD?



You may not need to spend money on energy drinks to get the energy you need. In fact, some so-called energy drinks may do more harm than good. That's because caffeine is one of the main ingredients in many energy drinks.

Caffeine is a stimulant. It can increase reaction time and alertness. But, it can also increase blood pressure and heart rate. This could be bad for people with risk factors for heart disease. Caffeine can cause nervousness, upset stomach, headaches and sleep problems. These side effects can seem even worse if you are taking certain medicines.

Besides caffeine and sugar, some brands of energy drinks may have ingredients that have not been tested for safety. Your best bet for getting energy is the natural way:

- ◆ Eat a well-balanced diet
- ◆ Drink plenty of water
- ◆ Exercise regularly
- ◆ Get plenty of sleep

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